

Federal Funding for Soldier Hollow Falls Short

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COURIER STAFF

Last month, The Wasatch County Courier detailed Roger Black's presentation of the Salt Lake Organizing Committee's (SLOC) Soldier Hollow Transportation Plan to the Charleston Town Board. Black told members, "If funds become available, SLOC would improve (2400 South). An attempt was made to find funds to fix this road. The funds aren't there, so we're having to make due."

The October 27 announcement by Mortimer Downey, U.S. Deputy Transportation Secretary, regarding \$15 million for final Olympic transportation projects, led the Associated Press to announce, "Olympic organizers for the 2002 Winter Games have all the transportation funding they need from the federal government."

Not quite, according to Olympic and transportation officials.

"It's a new face on an old problem. It is new funding, but less than hoped for. It has benefited the county generally, but, nevertheless, it's a disappointment," said Wasatch County Olympic Coordinator Bob Mathis, who is concerned taxpayers will be left with a burden they were promised would never haunt them. "They had hoped for \$2.4 million to complete Soldier Hollow access roads, so they're going to have to dip into other funds that were appropriated for Olympics that will make up for this shortfall."

Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) informed Mathis the highway project is over budget by \$200,000 and Soldier Hollow is over budget by \$400,000.

Mathis notified Wasatch County Commissioners that UDOT revealed there is a shortage of \$6 million to fund all the requests of the Olympic Transportation Budget. This budget does not include road improvements, such as 2400 South and Midway's 250 West leading to the venue, that were added to the list of requests in the last few months.

As described last August in the *Courier*, Arlin Kohler told SLOC during a Midway City Council meeting if 250 West is not improved he would personally vote to close the road during the games. This would prohibit the "Olympic Family" from using a main route to the Soldier Hollow venue. About 520 athletes, 1,300 volunteers and 20,000 spectators are expected to visit the venue daily.

"I feel like if we're going to have a safe access for Olympians and their families, then SLOC needs to improve it so it's safe," Kohler said. "With local traffic and the Olympic addition, it will

be an unsafe situation, especially in winter. It's not wise to put people at risk."

"Wasatch County risk management officials have told Midway 250 West is inadequate and would have to be closed during the Olympics. I've asked SLOC about working on those intersections. The turns and roads leading up to 250 west are highly inadequate," said Mathis, who is striving to push SLOC and UDOT to make necessary improvements.

Midway Mayor Eugene Owens said he doesn't think SLOC's traffic allocations are fair.

"We're not getting anything. They said they would fix the roads to where they are safe. If they're not going to help us than maybe we just ought to close it," said Owens. He acknowledged Tate Lane is being completely redone; but insists it won't be able to handle

traffic if 250 West is shut down.

Last summer, Wasatch Sheriff's Deputy Ken Van Wagoner wrote a letter to SLOC signed by Commissioner Mike Kohler, Heber Mayor Lynn Adams, Midway Mayor Gene Owens, Charleston Mayor John Whiting, Sheriff Mike Spanos and Chief of Police Ed Rhoades prioritizing roads and intersections for safety.

In Washington D.C., The Federal Relations Director of Transportation Programs, Michael Huerta, said obtaining the additional funds is UDOT's responsibility.

"We lobbied for (additional funds). It certainly is not going to happen this year. All the projects took a bit of a haircut," said Huerta, noting that Utah Senator Bob Bennett and Congressman Chris Cannon were instrumental in prioritizing the project. "It was definitely called out as an important priority in terms of something needed for the games, and was very heavily promoted by our congressional delegation. I didn't see anyone arguing in opposition to it."

Huerta said the project's total cost since fiscal year 1998 is \$11 million. He said legislators were persuaded to view the Olympics as a national, not state-sponsored, event.

"We made the case that we are hosting the world and the U.S. and Utah are partners in the 2002 games," Huerta said.

Mathis said the county has offered to allocate \$100,000 from their road fund and Midway is submitting \$100,000 from their capital improvement budget towards Stringtown Road and 2400 South improvements.

"We've got to keep pounding on the issue," Mathis proclaimed. "Wasatch County has to work with SLOC and UDOT to see that we are fairly represented in this reallocation."



Senator Bob Bennett assisted in locating federal funding for Soldier Hollow.

**SOLDIER HOLLOW
WORLD CUP HOUSING NEEDED**

EDITORIAL

Spanos to Voice His Opinion

ed Sheriff would similarly be inclined, and in fact should be encouraged to express his views. After all, he was elected by the people based on his political positions expressed during the last election.

Now, a legitimate argument can be made that law enforcement ought to be nonpolitical. We were concerned with the many calls we got from "Vote Yes" supporters complaining that their signs had been torn down or stolen. When we suggested they call the Sheriff's Office and report the crime the usual response was, "Spanos won't do anything about it, didn't you read *The Wave* article?"

There is a problem if the public loses faith in their law enforcement officers because of the Sheriff's political statements. We don't believe for a minute that Sheriff Spanos' political positions would have any effect on his oath to enforce the law. However it concerns us that some people believe it might.

Police Chiefs, the head of the Highway Patrol and the FBI are all appointed positions. It is a reach to say they aren't political appointments, but they aren't elected positions. As far as we can tell only county sheriffs are elected law enforcement positions. Of course, even appointed law enforcement officials can express their opinion unless their contracts forbid it. J. Edgar Hoover was never timid in expressing his political opinions. If you believe that the office of County Sheriff should be an appointed, rather than elected position, contact Utah State Senator Beverly Evans or State Representative Gordon Snow and ask them about changing the law. But until the law is changed Sheriff Spanos has every right in the world to express his opinion (just like we have the right to disagree with him.)

SHERIFF

COMMENTARY

Death of an Innocent Child : An Unnessessary Lesson

with this for the rest of his life. But I cannot seem to get over the stupidity and selfishness of his action. We are constantly reminded that we shouldn't leave a dog unattended in the car.

Why would anyone think twice about a child.

The story in the *Salt Lake Tribune* this weekend spent a lot of copy on how bad Gage's family feels, how his father feels and some romantic quotes from Gage's mother. Reading it just made me angrier. Forty-five minutes. The cold. Each night Gage was missing, the temperature dropped below freezing. Gage probably had only one focus before the

Waymont. I'm angry at the two hunters who say they saw Gage in the truck and did nothing. I'm angry at the circumstances. I find I have no relief except to hold, kiss my own 14 month old boy and vow never, never to ever leave him alone under any condition. That is the responsibility of being a parent.

There are feelings for James Wilkes, the volunteer who found Gage's body. I can't imagine what went through his mind when he and his dog found Gage curled up in the snow. Wilkes carried Gage's body for two hours before becoming lost and exhausted himself. He put the boy's body down gently in a spot he would remember and went for help. The *Tribune* article showed a photo of Mr. Wilkes in tears, hugging a family member at the funeral of a little boy he didn't know.

If anything positive can come of this, it should remind all of us who have children or care for them, how important it is to have common sense when dealing with them and when to set our own personal agendas aside. For now, all we can do is say a pray for Gage and hope this never happens

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